

Differences Between Primary Elections & General Elections

County Primary Election Cycle

Counties with a County Primary will have a May Election (Tuesday). The individuals that obtain the most votes during the County Primary Election will advance to the County General Election to run against the other party's nominee and any independents that qualified for that office.

The **County General Election** will be held in August. For a county office, party nominees and independent candidates all qualify at the same time.

State Primary Election Cycle

The State Primary for the Office of Governor, U.S. Senate, U.S. Congress, State Senate, & State Representative will be in August.

November General Election

The First Tuesday in November is the State General Election Date for the offices on the August State Primary Ballot.

Office Seekers

Candidates for Federal, State, County or Municipal Office should contact their local County Election Office to inquire about nominating procedures, qualifications and qualifying deadlines for various elected offices.

A **Primary Election** is a nominating election. Winning the party's nomination is the first step in the election process. It narrows the field in a political party to one individual for a specific office.

A **General Election** is the election in which all voters make the final choice from among the party nominees and the independent candidates for a specific office.

****Not all elected offices are nominated by party****

First time voters and voters new to our state are often confused by what is expected of them at a Primary Election and what is expected of them at a General Election.

Tennessee has two recognized parties under current state law: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

When a candidate is successful in a **Primary Election** they advance to the General Election for their particular office. For example: in a **Primary Election** for the Office of Governor, the Democrats run against Democrats and the Republicans run against Republicans. The successful Democratic nominee and the successful Republican nominee for Governor would advance to the **General Election** to face each other and any independent candidates.

Individuals who are the top vote getter in any General Election are elected with the powers and responsibilities granted to their office by law.

VOTING AT A PRIMARY ELECTION

In Tennessee, citizens register to vote. No declaration of party affiliation is required at the time of registration. Tennessee does not register by party.

All legally registered voters in Tennessee are issued a "Voter Registration Card" by their county election office. No party affiliation appears on the voter's card.

When a voter appears to vote during any Primary Election they **must** declare if they wish to vote in the Democratic Primary or the Republican Primary.

The voter's declaration is recorded on a signed Application for Ballot. The ballot issued to the voter for the Primary Election will have only the names of candidates in the party that the voter is affiliating with on that Election Day.

When two Primary Elections are being conducted on the same date (Presidential Preference and County Primary), the voter is prohibited from voting in different primary elections on the same day (one political party locally and the other political party nationally). Their ballot will be a Democratic Ballot all the way up and down the ballot or it will be a Republican Ballot all the way up and down the ballot.

Offices with a Mandatory Primary Election

President, Governor, U.S. Senate, U.S. Congress, State Senate and State Representative

What about County Offices & Primaries?

Each of your county's two Political Parties has the right to call a County Primary Election for any or all of the County Offices elected. Local County Election Offices have no authority or right to call a county primary election for either party (nor do local county commissions).

School Board and City Offices are not elected by political party affiliation in the State of Tennessee (unless a city charter expressly permits a primary for a city office).